

Message Text

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73

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 CEA-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11

FRB-02 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 CIEP-02 SPC-03 STR-08

TRSE-00 LAB-06 SIL-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 L-03 NSC-07 PA-04 PRS-01 SS-20 USIA-15 SAJ-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8729

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

UNCLAS LONDON 03287

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, EEC, UK

SUBJECT: HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE ON EC "RENEGOTIATION"

1. SO FAR, THE DEBATE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE QUEEN'S SPEECH HAS TOUCHED ONLY BRIEFLY ON THE WILSON GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO SEEK A "FUNDAMENTAL RE-NEGOTIATION" OF THE EC TERMS OF ENTRY AND TO PUT THE RESULTS TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE. THE HOUSE IS EXPECTED TO DEAL WITH THE EC ISSUE AT GREATER LENGTH IN ITS FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEBATE ON MARCH 19.

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2. LEADING OFF FOR THE CONSERVATIVES IN THE DEBATE

ON MARCH 12, HEATH SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOW HAVE TO GO BACK ON ITS ELECTION PROMISE TO BRING IN CHEAP FOOD FROM THE COMMONWEALTH SINCE IT WILL HAVE DISCOVERED THAT NO CHEAP FOOD IS AVAILABE. HE ALSO SAID THAT IT IS ANOMALOUS FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO TRY TO RENEGOTIATE THE TERMS OF ENTRY WITHOUT PARTICIPATING IN THE EC INSTITUTIONS, AND URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO SEND LABOUR MPS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. ON THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO PUT THE RESULTS OF A RENEGOTIATION TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE, HEATH SAID THAT WHETHER A GENERAL ELECTION OR A CONSULTATIVE REFERENDUM IS HELD, THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE THE FINAL DECISION WOULD STILL REST WITH THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, AND THE HOUSE -- HE POINTED OUT -- HAS ALREADY VOTED IN FAVOR OF GOING INTO EUROPE BY A MAJORITY OF 112.

3. THE LIBERAL LEADER, JEREMY THORPE, SAID THAT THE LABOUR PARTY'S ELECTION MANIFESTO WAS "EXTRAORDINARILY VAGUE" ON EUROPE. THORPE SAID THAT THERE ARE MANY SUPPORTERS FOR THE VIEW THAT THE TERMS SHOULD BE IMPROVED. ON THE QUESTION OF A REFERENDUM, THORPE SAID THAT IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO HOLD A REFERENDUM ON A SINGLE ISSUE, SINCE "IT IS NOT NECESSARILY THAT ISSUE UPON WHICH THE PEOPLE PASS JUDGMENT. THEY PASS JUDGMENT ON A WHOLE VARIETY OF ISSUES AND ON THE GOVERNMENT IN PARTICULAR"

4. PRIME MINISTER WILSON DECLINED TO ELABORATE ON THE EC ISSUE AT THIS STAGE IN THE DEBATE. THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY, HE SAID, "WILL BE EXACTLY AS WE PUT IT TO THE COUNTRY. WE SHALL ENTER INTO FUNDAMENTAL RENEGOTIATION OF THE TERMS OF ENTRY INTO THE EEC. WHEN THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE COMPLETED, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE GONE AND WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, THE QUESTION OF BRITAIN'S RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY WILL BE PUT TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE, AND THEIR DECISION WILL BE FINAL." WHEN PRESSED TO SAY HOW THE QUESTION WOULD BE PUT TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE, WILSON SAID "ALMOST CERTAINLY A REFERENDUM," ALTHOUGH HE COULD "CONCEIVE OF CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THERE

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WOULD BE A GENERAL ELECTION."

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